RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Socio-Psychological Consciousness and Growth of Women: A Comparative Study of Selected Short Stories of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahasweta Devi

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I Tentative Title :

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II Introduction :

Woman as a part of a society undergoes a never-ending struggle against different social factors like biological, social, political etc. that restrict her freedom. She has been considered as the weakest section of society throughout the ages in terms of her bodily features that are different from that of a man. She becomes a victim of various discriminations that spring out of the caste and gender bias from the sociological point of view. She seems to be undergoing mental and physical oppression inside her family and the society outside. A woman has to work hard against the grains to even exist as a human being. It seems that her inner soul cries in agony and longs for an outlet to express its own feelings, sentiments, dreams, hopes etc. She seems to be engaged in making a meaningful journey from otherness to her original self, from bondage to salvation, from emotional to rational in a predominantly patriarchal society.

The mind and body of a woman have been considered as a colony which seems to be occupied by its owner trying to possess her and thereby colonizing her to make an inferior being in comparison to the colonizer. The society appears to practise all the evil machinations further aggravated since colonisation. The subservience of woman is considered as natural act of man in Indian society. In terms of caste, religion, class, education, family etc. she seems to be fighting severe several mental, physical and psychological wars. But in post-colonial era in Indian society some of the women seem to attract the attention of many in their deliberate attempt of articulating their inner feelings conspicuously going beyond the socially pre-defined rules.

The stratification system seems to degrade a woman's social status regarding her caste, gender, class along with other deadly social issues. In the process of socializing a woman concerning gender consciousness she is taught to carry forward her womanliness with socially predefined mannerism and behaviour exclusively for her own folk and thus pushing forcefully towards the margin to bear all mental and physical assault from patriarchy. Specific gender role performed by a specific biological structure (woman) includes the influential pressure of

family, society and above all her surroundings where woman is considered to be gendered as a secondary existence. The meek, oppressed, docile, submissive and gendered woman becomes endangered in her own inhibited marginal space that has been delimited by the patriarchy. Her wings seem to be weighed down by the burdens of society. As a socially oppressed and gendered class a woman fails to find a place amidst the horrors of Casteism. A woman is regarded as a worst victim of caste system which takes away even her life most of the time to keep up the false prestige of upper section of society. The horrendous caste system seems to push woman to the brink of extinction. The discrimination of wealth and power, social prestige of upper class, the untouchability etc. appear as the destructive factors of spoiling the atmosphere of a society in which woman has to endure spine-chilling consequences. She is brutally raped, tortured, murdered and so on.

The woman who is considered to be highly affected by these sociological issues seems to find her standing on the verge of identity crisis. She always appears to be identified as subordinate to someone else. Her true identity as a woman with all her cravings, personal demands, hopes and dreams etc. somehow seem to be expunged. A woman seems to appear in different role assigned to her by society as mother, wife, daughter, sister, sister-in-law etc. in which her self-identity remains unnoticed. Their existence has been particularised for homely duties where she has to make her surrounding satisfactory by dint of her physical labour from dawn to dusk to please the concerned authority. Humiliation in conjugal life and insult from her family are seen to take place as a daily occurrence of her life. She seems to fail to meet the basic need i.e. love and mutual respect from the society. Amidst this domestic drudgery, the true identity of the performer (woman) and her psychological feelings remain subdued under the pressure of society. She is observed as banging on the closed doors vehemently with the manacles of her hand with wistful yearnings for the redemption of her inner soul. To bear the oppression silently seems only way of her survival in a ruthless society. This long process of suppression and subjugation of woman is considered the prime cause of her changing attitude towards society to procure her identity. Constant and incessant interaction with society seem to change her social behaviour as well as her personality.

Thus, it has been noticed that societal pressure seems to be working as a compulsive force in their lives which help in shaping their unique individual personality to behave in a particular style. Social and cultural influence on a woman's personality is considered the sole reason of her behaviour towards a social condition. Every woman is seen reacting differently in

different situation to win over their enslavement by male dominated society in the short stories of Tagore and Devi. It has been said by Alfred Adler that every individual strives for the betterment of his situation which he has been termed as 'striving for superiority' by achieving a goal of life set by himself as a result of the social influence on him. A woman is also regarded to strive for the betterment of her positional superiority. Her interaction with society seems helping her to set the goal of her life, to take the decision of her life, to create a distinct lifestyle, to gain victory over the inferior complexity which she has been bearing since birth and the societal rules imposed on her in later stage. Adler says that behaviour is goal-directed. The women of Tagore and Devi are seen motivated to behave in their own unique style to lead themselves towards their goal i.e. to secure a room of their own. They are seen handling social problems with great accuracy of mind and behaviour though coming from the different strata of society. Dalit women in Devi's short fictions seem approaching to protest, revolt and rebel for their basic rights in their own style. They seem to revolt with their utmost strength for achieving a space of living with a deliberate attempt to raise themselves against the social injustice.

As society and individual juxtapose, social interest, i.e. the dealings of an individual with society, according to Adler, is one of the factors which works behind one's personality building. Woman not only as a woman but also as a human being too possess individual differences. Different traits of the personality of women compel them to behave according to the given social condition. The women characters seem to appear in the stories with their behavioural pattern changing from time to time as the occasion demands. The women characters like Mrinalini, Kalyani, Chandra etc. from Tagore's short stories and Dhouli, Jashoda, Draupadi etc. from Devi's short stories seem as the victimised entities from the social and cultural point of view. They are seen struggling with their psychological perception of mind against the oppression.

According to Karen Horney, socio-cultural background shapes an individual's personality. An individual is believed to produce basic anxiety which is caused by interpersonal relationships. She indicates that an individual to combat with basic anxiety takes shelter under three interpersonal orientations like moving toward people, moving against people and moving away from people based on his social and cultural background. The deprivation of an individual's need produces a sense of isolation which one tries to overcome throughout her life. The women appear to be emerged with their personal disposition, anxiety, depression, feeling of isolation, jealousy etc. which Horney termed as 'neurotic needs' that compel them

to behave differently against different time, place and situation within different psychological frame of mind. The women characters of Tagore and Devi seem to move towards people in need of love but they fail to gain personal admiration. They are forced to restrict their lives in a boundary which compels them to move against people. Finally, they are seen moving away from people to live their own lives. They take decisions for themselves – to live or to leave. Finally, their premeditated effort to reach a stage of self-actualization has been observed.

As both of the writers are seen following an unconventional style of presenting their women characters against the pre-established social hierarchy, the research aims to study their rising consciousness while dealing with societal issues firmly and their gradual psychological growth of mind to stand boldly in opposition with the socially oppressive forces like subjugation of women in terms of caste, gender, class leading towards an identity crisis etc. To look at the women characters of Tagore and Devi in their short stories from socio-psychological angle, the following stories that has been taken tentatively from "Galpoguchcha" by Tagore are : "Punishment", "The Wife's Letter", "In the middle of the night", "Woman Unknown", "Giribala", "Living or Dead", "Laboratory", "House No One", "Vision", "Emancipation", "Elder Sister", "The Conclusion". The tentative list of the stories of Mahasweta Devi is: "Breast-Giver" , "Draupadi" and "Behind the Bodice" from "Breast Stories", "Dhouli", "Sanichari", "The Tale of Rajabasha", "Chinta" from "Outcaste", "The Divorce" ,"The Saga of Kagaboga", "The Poet's Wife", "HE said,Pani", and "Love Story" from "Till Death Do Us Apart".

Definition of Terms:

Caste: Caste indicates the social stratification system. The term indicates a process in which a group of people is identified with one particular name for keeping the social order balanced according to the authority in name of power, status, wealth, position, religion etc. It divides people into different sub castes in which the upper caste uses to torment the lower ones. It defines the differentiation runs through society.

Gender: Gender comes under the caste system. Gender discrimination as a burning problem exists in society which divides people in different categories from biological point of view as male, female and transgender. According to this, society allows different activities for different genders which rises the discrimination as the deadliest social issues. It defines the discrimination among people who have to live within a restricted boundary. Any violation of the rule in specific performance of a specific gender evokes revolution in society.

Patriarchy: t refers to a system of society where male is considered the supreme authority and thus, they appear as the dominating force to a woman. Man is considered a primary existence whereas a woman is considered as secondary existence in society. It comes as an unjust social system where woman has to be crushed under the domination of male.

Oppression: The term is used to mean the injustice of authority to anyone. The term encompasses a wide range as it means the maltreatment of someone physically, mentally, politically, socially, psychologically, culturally and so on. Many theorists have given different opinions about oppression. It indicates the cruelty and atrocity of one to control another. It comes in form of violence, exploitation etc. It defines the social hierarchy of being inferior and superior.

Consciousness: The term is taken as someone's awareness or perception on something. Here women are found to be aware in their present state of being oppressed by the male authority. Their responsiveness towards the betterment of their plight is called their consciousness.

Personality: This term refers as a set of attributes by which an individual gets identified in terms of behaviour, thought, action and so on. Personality differs from individual to individual. It has been regarded as the combination of characteristics which separates one from another. It is made up of characteristics pattern of thoughts, behaviours, feelings etc. Each one appears unique in his personality.

III Review of Literature:

Dr. Sudhakar Bhoite and Lalita Shinde's article "An Overview on Personality Development" published in *International Journal of Freud in Scientific Research and Development* (2019) gives a concept of the development of personality. According to them, personality varies from individual to individual based on their heredity and environment. Various types of personalities like introvert and extrovert, Type-A hardworking and Type- b easy-going personality, Judging and Perceptive personalities etc. have been included in it. Socio-Psychological factors play prime role in shaping one's personality. To the study of Personality, the writers have given a brief account on trait theory. A special reference on Erik Erikson's eight life stages has been made in this article. As Personality theories are different from psychology, the writers have given short description of Freud's Psychoanalytic theory which is all about id, ego and super- ego. Socio- psychological theory, according to the writers, searches a link between individual and society with reference of the theories of Adler

and Horney. This review has helped me in understanding about what personality is and the features of it to understand an individual.

Debjani Bandyopadhyaya's article "Rabindranath Tagore: his childhood and creativity from the perspective of a Psychiatrist" (2018) presents a psychoanalytic study of Tagore's childhood in *My Reminiscenes* by Tagore in light of Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory. As the article has a psychological angle of presentation, it has helped me to think about Tagore from psychological point of view. It is all about his early stages of life, his school days, his poetic career, inspiration behind her creations etc. The writer has tried to show how Tagore loved Nature so much and how the school days were like a stage of confinement to him.Tagore had an open view regarding the freedom of a child. A child should be forgiven by the teachers for his mistakes and allow the child's development on later stage. Erikson's one of the eight psychosocial stages like industry versus inferiority is very much applied on the school experiences of a child. An inferiority sense can occur in early childhood stage by some negative influences as it had happened with Tagore, according to the writer, which later on helped him to make his behaviour more orderly. A child should not be punished for the mistakes he does but it has to be taken as a matter of normal behaviour allowing the child in the manifestation of his inner creativity on later stage of his life.

Louisa Mary Cappelli in her article, "Sites of Commodification and Exploitation in Mahasweta Devi's Breast Stories." Published in *Bharatiya Prajna : An Inter Disciplinary Journal of Indian Studies* (2016) has helped me to know about the exploitation of women as she has expressed her views how Mahasweta Devi has dedicated her whole life working upon the Adivasis, the marginalized women to illuminate on their sufferings. It shows Devi's concern for the down- trodden who lives in the periphery of society. Here Mary Louisa has tried to show the commodification and exploitation of women- breasts to earn their livelihood in a situation where poverty reigns. According to Mary, *Breast Stories* talks about 'the gender - specific mistreatment and subjugation' (P-51). Devi has clearly hinted at the theme that behind the stories lie the horrible face of rapists by wolves like men who are ready to tear the flesh of a woman. The stories show how patriarchy has turned women into commodity.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in the preface of her translated book, *Breast Stories* (2014) by Mahasweta Devi has beautifully laid down her thoughts like the class- consciousness in society, the use of women as a piece of body only, their sufferings against brutal oppression of patriarchy etc. This powerful preface has presented the use of woman as mere body which helped me a lot in understanding the struggle of dalit women in society. According to Spivak,

breast as a recurrent image has used not merely as a symbol of a woman's physicality. In 'Draupadi' Dopdi's breast, the erotic object becomes the object of torture and revenge. The breast of Jashoda in 'Breast- Giver', is an object of survival which has transformed into commodity as the story proceeds. In 'Behind the Bodice', the breast becomes the object of male violence. Jashoda being the prey of class consciousness of society succumbs to death in course of time after using her breast to feed numerous children. The aboriginal Dopdi and Gangor representing proletariat class represents the story of the gender violence where their breasts have been used as a matter of gratification to the male members of society. Finally, she has expressed her views that behind the bodice lies the mark of the hellish dance of multi-rapists.

Ashalata P. in her article "Status of Dalit Women in India -Caste and Gender Based Exclusion" published in *Indian Journal of Research* (2013) has narrated the status of dalit women in India. Dalit women are seen oppressed by being poor, dalit and overall being a woman. They undergo tortures inside their community too. They are triply oppressed on terms of their low caste, gender and class. The writer has mentioned the book *Manusmriti* of ancient India which talks about stratification of Caste system. The book encourages the society to lead women towards illiteracy, early childhood marriage etc. The woman has to bear all kind of physical atrocities. They are deprived of their basic human rights in spite of the amendment of laws in the fast – globalized world.

Urmil Talwar in her reviewed work, "The Subaltern Speaks, Mahasweta Devi" (2012) has expressed that Mahasweta Devi's works are not gender biased. This article has helped me in gaining insight into the class-consciousness that runs through society where lower class gets oppressed by the upper class. Devi's fictions, as told by Talwar, are delivered with great honesty and simplicity. Devi has poured her heart with anger and disgust in the newspapers against the evil machinations by Government agencies applied to the Adivasis or aborigines. The socio – economic need of the tribal remains unheard to the authority which brews anger in Devi's mind which has tried to give voice for the oppressed in all of her fictional works as expressed by Talwar.

Chitra Deb's book *Women of the Tagore's Household* (2010) which contains a socio - historical background of Tagore's household where women have been given special priority in terms of freedom, education, modernisation etc. has helped me in gaining knowledge about the influences of literary atmosphere and educated women on Tagore. This book is an

enriched storehouse of the information of how Mrinalini Devi, Tagore's wife and Kadambari Devi, his sister-in-law influenced Tagore's life to portray women characters from different point of view. The women of Tagore's home were culturally enriched due to the literary atmosphere perfectly provided by the family. Jnandanandini and Sushama started to tread on the path of women empowerment. Chandramukhi and Kadambini being the first two female graduates of India proved that the women of Jorasanko paved the path for the woman to emancipate themselves. The women like Protiva and Pragya presented various art forms world-wide. Tagore was much influenced by the literate women who definitely inspired him to create the empowered woman.

In his book *Studies in Tagore: Critical essays (*2004), Santosh Chakrabarty has presented Tagore's women and their empowerment in contemporary society through a brief analysis of some of Tagore's short stories, novels, dramas etc. This book has helped me in understanding how the role of woman as daughter, mother, sister, daughter-in-law gained admiration from man but they had no value outside the world. But recent socio-economic evolution has changed woman's status to a great extent.Tagore's progressive thinking has been manifested through his characterization of women characters. The women are seen in breaking the traditional path of playing a stereo-typed role of mother,daughter and so on.Now they begin to speak their own language. Widow's clandestine love appears forefront as a daring act and so many activities seem to help to gain a place of their own.

Mary M. Lago in her essay ''Tagore's Liberated Woman'' published in1977, examines the role of a woman as defined by Tagore himself. She has expressed her views on Tagore's women who seek liberation through literature. Tagore has a great faith in the inner power of woman. He states that woman is like soil, the tolerant one in which life grows in Tagore is fully sympathised with the daily lives, joy and sufferings and will and woe of life of his women characters. The most important contribution of Tagore in the field of short story, Mary Lago says, is that his creation of women characters who seek liberation through literature after passing through a phase of intellectual dilemma.Their intellectual manifestation is for only self-realisation and self-complacency and not for any pecuniary gain.Their arduous journey from domestic to intellectual domain is beautifully penned down by Tagore, according to Lago. This article has helped me in realizing Tagore's views regarding nature, ability and true spirit of women.

IV Relevance:

It has been regarded that masculinity represents superiority, power, self-assertion and domination whereas femininity represents docility, self-negation and passivity. It has been noticed from the previous reviews of literature that the women characters in the short stories of Tagore and Devi have been analysed only by the oppression they bear from cradle to grave by the male-dominated society in various forms like rape, physical torture, mental torture, suppression, marginalization etc. since colonisation. In post-colonial era It seems that some of the women begin to express their inner feelings as well as resistance towards the sociological oppressive forces in different ways. Sometimes they seem to be rebellious, sometimes they seem to take decision about themselves, sometimes they seem to break pre-defined social norms etc. The women are seen coming from different section of society and battling against the goal set by themselves with their own personality against different social injustice. It seems from their action and behaviour while interacting with people in different social situation that their behaviour is motivated to direct towards a goal. Their psyche and their compulsion of behaving in a different manner in different situation with their individual differences surprisingly directing themselves towards the same goal motivates me deeply to study on it. The research aims to illuminate the major aspects of their personality, their individual traits and their motives behind their action that seem to help in their socio-psychological growth. This study, I believe, can help the researchers later to understand how the socio-psychological growth of the social consciousness of women helping them in shaping their personality to deal with social issues in different social background.

V. Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of the research is to present a detailed analysis of the personality of the women characters in the short stories of Tagore and Devi which seems helping them to strive for the betterment of their heart-rending situation which has been provided by society and culture. The research intends -

- to study the oppression of women in terms of differentiation of gender, caste, class etc.

- to analyse the pre and post- colonial psychological state of mind of women

- to study the psychoanalytical theories of Alfred Adler and its impact on Tagore's women character

- to study the women of Tagore and Devi who has come from different sections of society with their individual differences under different neurotic trends in light of Karen Horne's theory

- to study about factors and motives behind their action

- to analyse how the woman builds a style of their own

- to explore their concept of self that helps to struggle against social injustice

- to analyse women from Ashis Nandi's theory on psychology of colonialism point of view

- to study women and their struggle from Bell Hook's theoretical aspect

- to study Devi's women characters from Spivak's theory on subaltern women

- to study the woman characters in light of Mary Young's concept of 'Five faces of oppression'

- to study how the characterisation of women by a man's pen differs from that of a woman

-To make a comparative analysis of women of Tagore and Devi with their similarities and dissimilarities.

VI Research Methodology

The methodology of research that is proposed to be taken in the present study would consist of the analysis of the women characters of Tagore and Devi in light of the theories of Alfred Adler and Karen Horney. Their personality development in sociological background will be introduced. It will include the study of the women characters in light of Asish Nandy's theory based on psychology of colonialism. The struggle of Dalit women in Devi's stories in terms of Gayatri C. Spivak's ground breaking book "Can the subaltern Speak?" will be discussed. Bell Hook's feminist theory will be taken to analyse the same. To show the women characters of both the writers as victim of oppression, Iris Marion Young's theory of oppression will be analysed. My research methodology will be consisting of close reading of the texts of both the writers along with narrative techniques, discourse analysis, use of rhetorical devices etc. MLA eighth edition will be followed while formatting the thesis.

VII Tentative Chapterization:

Chapter - I INTRODUCTION

The first chapter will begin with brief analysis of Indian writing in English. The emergence of short story as a genre will be discussed and how it has gained its permanent place in Indian literature will be described. Later on, the contribution of Tagore and Devi in the fields of short stories will gain a special significance in my thesis. An introductory note on the status of women in present scenario will be discussed. The theories of Alfred Adler and Karen Horney will be introduced shortly. The reviews of various articles, journals, essays, books etc, which have helped me in preparing the research will be furnished here

Chapter – II WOMEN CHANGING THE SOCIAL EVILS IN THE SHORT STORIES OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND MAHASWETA DEVI

The second chapter will be about the personality theory of Alfred Adler applied to the women characters of selected short stories of Tagore which speaks about the uniqueness of each individual. An individual strives for perfection partly to compensate the feelings of inferiority. Each individual has his or her own unique life style. The concept of self helps an individual to interact with the environment around him or her. The women characters of Tagore seem to act with their own unique individual differences. In this context the women characters will be judged from Ashis Nandy's theory of psychology of colonialism too to show their growth of social consciousness.

Chapter - III WOMEN STRUGGLING AGAINST SOCIAL INJUSTICE IN THE STORIES OF MAHASWETA DEVI

Third Chapter will focus on the growth of aborigine writing in present scenario. The status of dalit women in past and present days will be analysed. Simultaneously, the women characters of Mahasweta Devi who appear as the victim of basic anxiety like anger, disgust, depression etc. as a result of their non-fulfilment of different neurotic needs like love, affection, appreciation etc. in light of Horne's theory will be studied. Their changing attitude towards life seems to help them to fight against all oddities with their individual personality to deal with society and culture. They are seen moving towards people in need of love and personal admiration but non fulfilment of their needs make them move away from people. The subaltern characters of Devi will be analysed under Spivak's ideas on the silence of subaltern

Chapter – IV SHORT STORIES OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND MAHASWETA DEVI IN THE LIGHT OF MARY YOUNG'S THEORY OF OPPRESSION

Fourth chapter will consist of the detailed analysis of exploitation of women in the short stories of Tagore and Devi. As the women are found to be victimised in various ways, they seem to be robbed off their basic rights. They appear as a victim of violence throughout the years. Mary Young has given five structures of oppression. This chapter will illuminate the women characters of Tagore and Devi in light of Young's theory of oppression. Young has given different structures of oppression to show how a woman has to be oppressed in every sphere of her life. It will be a comparative study of the women characters of Tagore and Devi in terms of different modes of oppression.

Chapter - V CONCLUSION

Fifth Chapter will be adorned with a critical appreciation regarding the comparison of the women personalities created both by Tagore and Devi.A comparative study is required to perceive the women characters created with a male pen and the women characters created with female pen. The research attempts to study the difference of looking women through the eyes of male writer and female writer in terms of presenting the psychological journey of a woman through the norms of society and culture. How the language, events, settings etc., have woven differently by these two writers will be another aspect of this chapter as well. The plot, characters, language, the use of words, use of symbols, irony etc. A comparative study of presenting women by a male writer and a female writer from the same point of view will be discussed thoroughly in this chapter. The style of writing of both the writers in presenting women in their works will be illuminated. The concluding chapter will lead towards the findings of this research how the women finally with all their different personalities in different circumstances and in different settings have been striving for achieving the goal to reach the stage of self-realization.

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